{See Note at end.}

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THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT

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THREE ATTITUDES AS TO RELIGION.

The ethical movement is a distinctly religious movement. Its aim is to fill the void left in many lives by the decadence of theology. It seeks to satisfy the religious needs of those who have parted company with the traditions of the past, and who feel at the same time that they cannot do without the inspiration, the support, and the comfort of a religion; who are teachable pupils of science, and accept in a thankful spirit all the truths which it may bring to light, and who yet feel that science can never take the place of religion. Speaking for my companions in the Ethical Movement, I would say that three attitudes with respect to religion seem to us possible at the present day. The first is the attitude of the so-called conservative class; that is, of those who are satisfied with some one of the dogmatic systems of theology. With this class we are not concerned. If they are sincere in their convictions, if the formulas of their faith give them a real support in life's troubles, it is well for them. We do not quarrel with them, we do not assail them. We are on a totally different road from theirs. We salute them as we pass them by. We have problems of our own to work out, and cannot tarry to spend our time in useless argument and discussion.

Nor are we any more concerned with the second possible attitude,—the attitude of those who deny religion altogether, who assert that the thing religion is become obsolete, that the thoughts and sentiments classed under this head should be suffered to die out; who say that religion was a useful go-cart to support the steps of infant mankind, but that its service is ended now that men have learned to walk erect. From our point of view, we can only say: Those who think religion can ever be eradicated from human nature do not understand human nature, nor yet do they understand the nature of religion any better. They probably identify religion as such with such imperfect forms of it as have thus far appeared in human history; and, because these fail to meet their approbation, they throw religion overboard altogether. The office of religion is to connect the life of man, the individual, with the All-life. To my mind, the time will never come when the need of such a connection will cease to be felt.

It is in the third attitude, however, and the class that maintains it, that we are

chiefly interested,—a class that includes some of the most eminent scientists of our day. These men are fully aware that the domain of science has its limits, that the realm of possible knowledge is bounded by a vast outer circle of the unknowable; and they point to this vacant space as the proper sphere of religion. The function of religion, as they believe, is merely to satisfy the emotions. Let, then, the imagination, they say, roam freely over the infinite abyss. Let it build its airy bridges over the bottomless gulf. Let it construct whatever conceptions it pleases: we, as scientists, are not called upon to interfere, so long as it does not attempt to encroach upon our proper sphere. On the contrary, we shall even applaud its poetic images, if they serve to soothe and quiet the restlessness of the human heart. But with this attempt to refer religion merely to the sphere of the emotions we cannot content ourselves. It is precisely in this respect that religion differs from poetry. A poetic conception satisfies us, if, considered as a mere mental product, it displays a pleasing balance and harmony of its parts. We do not require of the visions that throng the poet's brain, or of the ideal forms which visit the artist's solitude, that there shall be any reality corresponding to them. The Madonnas of Raphael, the Moses of Michel Angelo, the heroes of the Iliad, are not therefore the less interesting, beautiful, or grand because no such personages ever existed in flesh and blood.

But the question of reality is the burning question that vexes the religious heart. It does not avail to prove that the conception of a God, considered as a mere conception, is grand, beautiful, and harmonious. The question that we all seek to answer when scepticism first assaults our minds, the question whose urgency has thrown many of us into an agony of inward suspense and has provoked the fiercest struggles, is the question, "Is there a reality corresponding to this conception of God, does such a being as God in very truth exist?" The well-meant proposal of the scientists, therefore, to effect a compromise between science and religion—to wit, that science shall confine itself within the sphere of reality, and religion within the sphere of poetry—will not answer. We might say to these friendly counsellors: You bid us freely dream whatsoever dreams will satisfy our emotional needs; but these dreams would have a subjective validity only. The coarser natures would have coarse religious dreams,—dreams of idolatry, of human sacrifice, and the like: the more refined natures would have finer dreams,—theistic, pantheistic, dualistic. But the dreams of the most highly cultivated races and persons would still, from this point of view, be mere dreams, would possess no objective validity whatsoever. And they miss the central fact about religion who do not perceive that its power over the human soul depends upon the reality which it ascribes to its conceptions.

Right here, in combating the views of this third class, we find the opportunity to make clear our own, by way of contrast. And may I now be pardoned if I attempt an excursion into the region of philosophical speculation, and enter on what may seem to you an abstruse metaphysical inquiry. Such metaphysicial inquiries are unavoidable, because they bear directly on the absorbing question which we have set out to discuss.

The Idea of an Ulterior Reality.

Let it be well remembered, then, that we accept in the most thorough-going manner the claims which are put forth on behalf of modern science. The whole field of possible knowledge lies within the territory of science. Even those portions of this territory which it has not yet brought under cultivation are pre-empted in its interest, and it has an indisputable title to take possession wherever it can. Such a thing as knowledge outside the limits of empirical science is impossible. We are no theosophists, we do not claim to possess any intellectual intuitions. We do not attempt, as the mystics do, to leap from the *ultima thule* of experience to knowledge of an infinite beyond; nor do we boast of access to ultimate certainties from which the vulgar herd are shut out. But, if the whole of possible knowledge is included within the boundaries of science, the whole of possible reality is not included within those boundaries. The very fact that there are confessedly limits which

science will never be able to transcend, that our intellect is discursive and cannot therefore grasp totality, that we cannot attempt to conceive of time and space as infinite without self-contradiction, shows that our interpretation of existence is only one among other possible interpretations, that our notions of reality are not co-extensive with reality *per se*. We are then constrained to form the idea of a reality beyond that which we know or of which we can ever have knowledge, and perhaps this idea of an ulterior reality, outside of space and time, is all that we shall need to satisfy the religious consciousness,

It is important here to draw a clear distinction between what is thinkable and what is conceivable. That other reality outside the world of space and time is, as we have just seen, not only thinkable, but we cannot help thinking it: it is one of those *thought-necessities* which are imposed upon us by the very constitution of our intellects. There are such thought-necessities, of which we seek in vain to rid ourselves. But the fatal mistake which is commonly made, the mistake which tends to the confusion of science and the lowering of religion as well, lies in the attempt to form a conception of that which is merely a thinkable idea, to transfer into a picture what is a thought-necessity, to represent as if it were in time and space that which is confessedly outside of time and space. The idea of that other reality is wholly inconceivable. It is beyond the sphere of cognition. We can form no mental representation of what it may be like. It is purely an idea of the reason, and the mode of existence for which that idea stands is forever beyond our ken. Yet as an idea it possesses an incomparable value.

This Idea of an Ultimate Unity, in Science.

The question may now arise in the minds of my hearers whether this last assertion can be made good, whether the idea of a reality which is itself inconceivable and outside the sphere of possible cognition is more than an idle speculation, whether such an idea can be of any service to us who are restricted to the data of the senses for the extension of our knowledge. And, in case it renders any service at all, it will be necessary to inquire what the peculiar nature of that service may be. It becomes my business, therefore, to show that the idea of an ulterior reality does play a part, and a most vital part, in the domain of scientific research itself. What is the chief characteristic by which modern science, fruitful of discoveries, bold in unravelling the secrets of nature, and prophetic of still richer results to come, is distinguished from the barren scholasticism of the Middle Ages? The distinction is indicated in the greater prominence given to the inductive method of investigation. The employment of induction as a method of research, we are commonly told, has produced all that harvest of achievement which is the boast of the last few centuries. We shall not attempt to qualify this assertion, but shall accept it as the somewhat rough statement of an undoubted truth.

Now, the whole process of inductive reasoning depends for its validity upon a certain primary assumption. Grant that, and whatever follows from it is true: deny it, and all the results of induction hang in air. This assumption has been defined as the axiom of the uniformity of nature. But whence is this axiom obtained? Has any one searched out the heart of nature, and brought back from its inmost recesses the tidings that the law of universal causation, of unbroken uniformity, is impressed upon the total order of things? Or does our brief experience of those uniformities which nature indeed exhibits warrant us in predicating complete uniformity of her processes? The point I have in mind is the following: On the one hand, we all speak with confidence of the inexorable laws of nature; we are entirely sure that, certain conditions being given as cause, certain other conditions will follow as effect, and, though millions of years should elapse before the same conditions reappear, they will none the less be followed by the same effect. This much we can predict. On the other hand, we hold these same inexorable laws open to constant revision: we can never be certain that we have observed all the conditions which enter as causes into the production

of given effects, for no "finite experience of duration can make us acquainted with all the infinite forces that play in the universe," How, then, can we harmonize these two seemingly contradictory facts: that, on the one hand, we ascribe a character of necessity to the partial uniformities which we see in nature, while, on the other hand, we are well aware that the grandest of our "laws" may have to be abandoned or modified. It is so far as these partial uniformities stand for an ultimate uniformity that we regard them as inexorable. It is precisely the idea of unity or totality applied to the category of causation, the idea of a universal causation, and the consequent assumption that no effect whatsoever is uncaused, that warrants us in speaking of the laws of nature as necessary. We ascribe the character of necessity to the principle of causality that is in them, which they represent. We can never be sure that we have found all the causes of any given effect; but in so far as a law does cover all the facts at present within our field of vision, in so far and for us it is inexorable. After a time, new phenomena may dawn upon us, and the law may then be modified, without the binding force of natural law being in the least impugned thereby. Thus we can understand that double attitude of the human intellect which regards every single law of nature as subject to revision, and yet invests it with the attribute of inexorable necessity. It is the universal causality that is necessary, of which all the partial causalities which we see in nature are manifestations. It is the universal law that is inexorable, of which all the so-called laws of nature are adumbrations. So far, then, is it from being true that the assumption of an ultimate uniformity is derived by a process of abstraction from those partial uniformities which we perceive that, on the contrary, these partial uniformities themselves depend for their lawful character upon the assumption of an ultimate uniformity of which they are the provisional and tentative expression.

But this universal causality itself, this universal law, what human mind can conceive it? Mark well, a universal causality! How can we form any notion of it, or of that mode of existence in which it may inhere? Where, within the boundaries of experience, can we find such a causality? Such a causality is utterly inconceivable, and yet the idea of it is the fundamental assumption in which the whole inductive process of reasoning is anchored. Without it there are no necessary laws of nature; without it, these so-called laws are mere bundles of probabilities, and the tree of science is cut down at the roots. And yet this fundamental assumption is not a truth which, by some mystical process, we ferret out from the arcana of nature: it is a mere idea of the reason,—an idea which we do not learn from nature, but which we impose upon nature, in the light of which we are constrained, by the very constitution of our intellects, to interpret the phenomena of nature; an idea, however, which approves its value, because it is the means of systematizing and unifying our knowledge within the field of experience itself. All the uniformities of nature are based upon the idea of an ultimate unity; that is to say, upon the idea of an utterly inconceivable reality.

The Idea of Unity in Ethics.

And now it is this same idea of an ultimate unity that reveals itself as the primary principle of ethics, and explains at once the absolute authority implied in the moral obligation, and the relativity of the specific moral commandments. We do not believe in any innate moral ideas, in any unimpeachable moral sense, in any code of ethics somehow divinely revealed or implanted in the human breast. It is the principle of unity applied to human relations out of which all the specific moral commands have grown; and this principle, variously understood according to such light as men had, has given rise to diversity in the moral theory and practice of nations and races, and will beget, let us hope, still greater and happier diversity as the course of evolution shall proceed. The principle of unity applied to conduct is only another name for what we call the good. All those actions are good which spring from the idea of a unity of relations subsisting between ourselves and our fellow-men. Our so-called

duties in the family arise, when we regard all the members of the family as a larger whole, and when we, completely identifying ourselves with this larger existence, seek to promote its collective interests in preference to our own as parts. The duties of the citizen toward the State follow, when we regard the State as a larger existence embracing many parts, and endeavor with patriotic earnestness to further the interest of that whole in preference to that of any of its parts. Even the strictly personal duties are seen to follow, when we consider ourselves as members of an ideal whole, the ideal humanity, whose ends we are to adopt as our own ends, for whose sake all self-restraint is to be imposed, and to whose service all our talents and gifts are to be dedicated. That the interests of the whole shall be paramount over the interests of any part,—in this practical dictum, the various systems of ethics will be found to concur with almost complete unanimity. But what else does this mean than that we are bound to promote unity of relation between ourselves and our fellow rational beings? and how else shall this preference for the whole rather than for any part be explained, if it be not the idea of unity, an idea implied in the very constitution of the human reason itself, in which is the source of this sublime constraint? That the whole human race shall be as one family, that all shall speak one language of love, that there shall be one justice for all, one and the same opportunity afforded all to unfold the germs of the rational nature that may be latent in them,—in these and similar variations on the theme of unity, the moral consciousness of mankind has embodied its ideals from time immemorial. When, therefore, we unify the phenomena of nature, we are scientific: when we unify our relations to our fellow-men, we are moral. In both cases, the lesser unities we may establish are dependent for their validity upon the idea of an ultimate, a supreme unity, which lurks behind them, and which is their all-embracing source and sanction. Unity and multiplicity,—these are the two poles between which the human mind moves. To establish unity in multiplicity, to raise multiplicity to the height of unity,—this is the task of the scientist in the realm of nature, of the moral man in the realm of conduct.*

The Idea of Unity in Religion: (a) on its thought-side.

And, after all that has been said, need I add that there is an intimate relation between the idea of unity and religion? nay, that that idea is the root from which the greatest religions have sprung? We are bound to consider two sides of religion, the intellectual and the practical. The æsthetic, too, is important; but it receives its cue and inspiration from the others, and we can therefore afford to omit it here. The intellectual service which religion is required to render is to supply a keystone to the arch of existence, to prolong the short and divergent lines of experience so that they shall meet in a single ideal point. All knowledge is piece-work, all science is fragmentary,—a few shreds gathered from a great pattern, a few building-stones toward a great edifice. But the mind of man aspires to know the whole pattern, to gain insight into the plan of the whole great edifice: that is, to know the world as a unity. The theological conception of God in the popular religions was designed to meet this demand. God is described as the creator of nature and the creator of man, as the first cause in whom all causality originates,—in the terminology of an ancient school, as "the place of the world," the one final existence on which all other existence rests. We have been taught by recent advances in thought that the demand for knowledge of the ultimate things is not to be gratified. We are emphatically warned that, in respect to the final questions of being, we must practise resignation. It is simply impossible to know the whole pattern, the whole plan of the edifice, to find the real keystone that shall close the arch of existence. But, nevertheless, the idea of such a pattern, of such a plan, of such a keystone, the idea of such a unity remains; nor can we, by any species of sophistry or rebellious protest

* A more detailed deduction of the system of duties from the principle of unity will be attempted elsewhere. The purpose of the above sketch is to indicate how the regulative idea of science becomes the imperative of ethics.

of the understanding, rid ourselves of this idea. With this *idea* of unity, therefore, we satisfy the intellectual demand of religion, so far as it can be satisfied.

(b) ON ITS PRACTICAL SIDE.

But there is also a practical side to religion; and this is, in many respects, the more important. This practical side has an obvious and tangible influence on man's weal or woe; and, on its account, all those philosophical considerations of which the popular heart would otherwise take no heed acquire a profound and almost pathetic interest. The function of religion is pre-eminently to be a Paraclete, a comforter. If men were uniformly happy, it is safe to say the need of a religion would not be so generally felt as it is. But the life of a man is full of trouble and hardship from his youth upward. There is chronic sickness in the world; there is death in the world, and heart-rending grief,—the loss of friends, the loss of children, the loss of husband or wife, the loss of those whose life is dearer to us than our own, and for whose sake we would willingly have yielded up our own. There is oppression in the world. Wrong triumphs over right; the base, the unscrupulous, trample on the innocent and the good. There is unmerited poverty in the world, and no outlook for a permanent righting of conditions, perhaps, for centuries to come. There is insanity in the world! These are the facts which confront religion, to which religion, or whatever celestial vision of it we may carry in our hearts, is required to give an answer. How weak, how unavailing, are the answers ordinarily attempted by optimists or pessimists,—they who seek to prove from experience that the world is either good or bad! The optimist sees only the bright side of things, and ignores the other. He sees what he wants to see: he dilates on the beauty of nature, the smiles of children, the joys of love. To him, all evil is but a form of good. The pessimist, on the other hand (and the pessimistic tendency is gaining ground rapidly in the modern age), like a bird of night, broods over the glooms and solitudes of existence. He sees only what is dark. To him, all good is only evil in a lesser degree, and the sole true good is to quench the germ of will that leads us to cling to existence at all. It is largely a matter of temperament and accident to which of these two classes the average man belongs. Persons of sanguine temper and of fortunate experience are apt to be optimistical: persons whose disposition is soured, or with whom the world has dealt harshly, are apt to take the pessimist view. It depends upon the color of the glasses through which men survey the world, whether they shall adopt the one or the other of these philosophies. But, in reality, these so-called optimistic or pessimistic philosophies are not philosophical at all. The facts of experience are far, far too scanty to permit us to generalize concerning the world at large, to say that *the world as such* is either good or bad. The geological ages are as nothing in the infinity of time, the few thousand years of human history upon which we pretend to base our induction are as the passing of the breeze. Our own short lifetime is still less worthy of consideration in an argument which pretends to embrace the totality of existence. We must then leave the field of experience altogether, if we wish to secure a moral optimism, to found our faith in the ultimate triumph of the good. We must flee from this sphere of phenomenal reality to a different order of reality altogether. And we have, at least, the idea of such a reality, the idea of unity; nor is it in our option to accept or reject this idea. Its acceptance is a thought-necessity. We are constrained so to regard the phenomena of nature as if there were in them an underlying unity; we are constrained so to direct our wills as if the principle of unity were to be realized through our acts. The principle of unity, then, the guiding principle of science and of morality, imperatively prescribes our practical philosophy. We are constrained to interpret the universe in terms of goodness. *We are constrained to regard it as if it were dedicated to a good purpose, in order that we, by our exertions, may contribute to make it good.*

The species of comfort, then, which we have to offer to the suffering consists in a call to action, a summons to rise above

the stand-point of pleasure and pain, and to take a totally different point of view. We do not point to another order of existence, in which the individual shall be indemnified for the pleasures which he has failed of here by other and more enduring pleasures. We cannot guarantee any compensation of this sort, though of course we can know nothing to the contrary. We simply call upon the individual to cease to think of his individual lot, as if that were of the greatest importance; to identify himself in thought with the universal existence, to accept the public ends upon his will, and to look upon the good of the whole as his good. They who thus lose themselves shall surely find what is better than their former selves. That it is possible thus to sink self in the unselfish, to sink the personal in the impersonal,—of that, the history of many patient, humble, unpretentious lives is the convincing proof.

The Ethical Movement (a) leaves this Unity impersonal.

We have now arrived at a point where we shall be able to definitely mark off our own position from that of the theologian, and to indicate the positive results to which it leads. First and foremost, then, for us the idea of an ultimate unity does not crystallize into a person. The reality that corresponds to the idea is utterly unknowable. The veil that covers the origin of things cannot be lifted. In all questions that relate to the beginning of things, we are to practice resignation. The theologian, too, says that God is unsearchable; but he first endows his God with certain attributes; and then shuts off inquiry by declaring that the human mind is incapable of comprehending these attributes. How, then, did he gain the knowledge of such attributes, to start with? We, on the other hand, claim to have no knowledge whatever of the ultimate reality. We possess only the idea of such a reality, concerning which we are well aware that it is utterly inconceivable. But this mere idea, though void of content when taken by itself, is not therefore valueless or meaningless. It is, as we have seen, the spur of science and the goad to moral reform. It teaches us to connect the series of causes and effects which science presents to us in wider and ever wider unities, and leads us to the discovery of nature's laws. It teaches us to embrace our fellow-men in wider and ever wider fellowship, and leads us to moralize human society. Is this thought of an ulterior reality a mere idle speculation? So far is this from being true that, on the contrary, all that is great, exalted and inspiring in our lives is but another name for the idea of unity. Truth is a name for unity as it appears to the contemplative mind. Goodness is a name for unity as it appears in the active will. Beauty itself is the apparition of unity to the senses. Love is an echo of the principle of unity in the emotions,—the feeling of our union with our fellow-men. In all that is grand, in all that is holy, in all that is sublime within human experience, we see the tokens of that other reality, that stranger from another world, which constrains us though we know it not, which guides us though we see it not, that hand which moves us from behind though we know not whence its leadings come; and we may therefore justly infer that the ulterior reality, which manifests itself by these tokens of the true, the beautiful, and the good, would, could it be known, so far surpass our human notions of truth and beauty and goodness as the idea is higher than the conception, as the infinite transcends the finite. It follows from this position that all those forms of religion which are based on the conception of a personality of deity as placed over against our own must, so far as we are concerned, be cancelled. We cannot address a deity in terms of adoration; we cannot pray in public or in private; we cannot go through forms or ceremonies which are intended to please, placate, or petition a divine sovereign. To us, it seems that, with the thought of the infinite in our breasts, silence is best; that every attempt to define in forms of language that which defies definition is a limitation, and therefore a degradation. To us, it appears that the frequency with which the most sacred subjects are mentioned in the churches, the familiar addresses as of "thou and thou," are calculated to impair the religious feelings more than to elevate

them, to breed disrespect for the loftiest themes rather than to encourage the true attitude of reverence and humility. To us, it seems that, when a man prepares to enter the sanctuary of religion, he should first cleanse himself inwardly, as the Israelites were commanded to keep clean for three days before they were allowed to witness the revelation on Mount Sinai. To us, it seems that the old Greek was right when he said that, "if horses and oxen could draw the shapes of their gods, they would draw them as horses and oxen;" but, as we are neither horses nor oxen, we should cease at last to attempt to drag down the infinite to the level of our poor, passionate, pitiful selves.

This, then, is the first change of attitude in our view of religion.

(b) It emphasizes Morality first, Religion second.

And the second change is even more important than the first. If it be true that all our moral efforts spring from the principle of unity, if our attempts to perfect ourselves and human society are but attempts to impress the pattern of the infinite upon finite conditions, if the force whereby we make these efforts is itself an influx from the region of the infinite, if *the effect of the unapparent can thus become apparent in our lives*, then we are not left without the means of establishing a communion between ourselves and the unknown infinite. Communion with God is that which all religions seek to effect,—communion between man, the conditioned, and God, the unconditioned; between man, the limited, and God the illimitable; between man, the bound, and God, the free. "Nearer, my God, to Thee," sings the most popular of all the religious hymns of the day. Well, nearer to God, nearer to that reality for which the name of God has stood, we can come in proportion as we carry out in practice that idea which is the sole revelation of the divine that has been vouchsafed to us, in proportion as we more and more fully apply the principle of unity to the affairs of men.

The great practical result, therefore, of this altered basis in religion is that the whole emphasis of religious teaching is laid upon the moral life. Even if a God spoke to you from heaven, you could not comprehend him, unless you were yourself Godlike. Godlike you can only become through the increase of your virtue. Morality, therefore, is put into the foreground; and religion is left to follow from it. Morality may be defined as obedience to the principle of unity; religion, as that sense of union which comes after obedience. The deeper and richer our moral experience, the fuller and grander will be the swell of our religious sentiments; the more finely and firmly we have knit the ties of unity between ourselves and others, the loftier and holier will be our sense of union with that universal life to whose influence we have opened the channels of our being.

I trust I may not seem to you like a propagandist anxious to intrude his views on others. I am laboring only to define my own; and whatever passing reflections I may have made on the opinions of others are but designed by way of contrast, to bring these, my own, into bolder relief. May I then be permitted, in order to define my position still more clearly, to make use of an analogy, and to say that our religion differs from the older religions as republicanism differs from monarchy? For us, the moral state, like the political state, no longer culminates in the person of a sovereign, the moral law does not express the will of that sovereign, and religion does not consist in loyalty to that sovereign. The moral law originates in the reason of those who are subject to it, and only because it is the utterance of their own reason are they bound to obey it. And the idea of a completed morality does not present itself to us under the figure of a kingdom of God, but as a commonwealth of the just, as a republic of rational beings united in perfect knowledge, perfect righteousness, and perfect love,—an ideal community which will never be fully established in the world of space and time, whose radiant image covers the gap of the unknowable.

(c) It seeks to formulate a higher code of ethics.

And there are two other practical results of this attempt to base religion

upon an idea that remain to be signalized, and that will fully reveal the motives which govern the Ethical Movement and have led to the formation of societies for ethical culture. The first of these results is that we must attempt to enlarge our code of ethics, to formulate, as it were, a new and more comprehensive code. It is commonly taken for granted that the contents of the moral law are unalterably given, that all men know what the law of goodness requires of them, only that they fail in living up to their convictions. The decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount are cited as sufficient statements of ethical law. And, when every other argument is exhausted, the last argument advanced for the maintenance of the Christian system is the supposed completeness of its ethical rules. But nothing can be further from the truth. The principle of morality is an absolute principle, it is the principle of unity which is founded in the human reason; but the applications of that principle have changed in the past, and must still constantly change in the future to meet the altered requirements of advancing civilization. Progress is demanded in our statements of moral truth as well as in every other direction, and we at the present day are especially called upon to aid in this work of progress. The questions of poverty, of the elevation of labor, of the relations of the sexes, the question of a stricter intellectual honesty which the advancement of science and the decline of theology has brought into prominence, present new moral problems not known to our fathers,—problems that urgently press for solution. We need, therefore, to seek new moral insight, to establish deeper unities between ourselves and our fellowmen, to formulate new duties, to advance finer scruples. And an ethical society is primarily a society of men and women associated together for the study of the problems of a higher life, for the discovery of those new points of duty by which the received code of ethics needs to be supplemented and enlarged.

(d) AND TO MAKE REAL THIS IDEAL.

Secondly, the higher practice must, in time, be made to conform to the higher theory. The form of association in any religion is determined by the religious ideal. The Christian Church is an attempt to reproduce on earth a divine original; namely, the "*ecclesia triumphans*," or the Church of Christ in heaven. Our form of religious association is likewise prescribed for us by our ideal. Our ideal is that of a community of rational beings united in perfect knowledge, righteousness, and love. Our form of association must be the attempted copy of such a community. The ethical maxim, to live for the whole rather than merely for one's own self, is almost a commonplace, though the source of its authority is not known, and its deeper meaning is not understood. All good men, however, do set out in life with this purpose fully in view. But the world around us is governed by other maxims, by base egotistical maxims. The tone of public morality is low; we are constrained, in dealing with foxes and wolves, to adapt ourselves to the ways of foxes and wolves. We do indeed seek to contribute to the general elevation, we do try to put a little leaven into the sluggish mass, but the effect of our efforts is barely perceptible; and the ideals of our youth are apt to grow pale and remote, as we grow older in years and experience. A degraded public opinion tends to drag us down to its own level so long as we rely on our own unaided efforts and seek to hold our own as isolated individuals in the midst of the multitude. Is it not, then, possible to bring the like-minded together, to concentrate those efforts which are more or less dissipated because they are scattered, to unite in a distinct fellowship those whom Mr. Matthew Arnold calls "the remnant of the righteous," whom we would rather call the nucleus of the righteous community that is to be? Such a nucleus an ethical society is designed to become. It is designed to become a company of men and women who are bound to practice the higher law, dictates of which they study; who are not saints,—where should we find such?—but who desire to become more saintly in their lives; who stand by one another and encourage each other in maintaining the better standard of conduct; who regard virtue as the chief concern of human life; who, if it is not possible to

gain wealth without soiling one's fingers, will rather not gain wealth; who, if any department of business is found to be so corrupt that a man cannot be honest in it and thrive, will go out of that business; who will rather live on the land or earn their bread by manual labor than disgrace their better part; who will thus make their association a beacon light, as it were, in the general community, a castle of purity on the heights, a means of moral renovation for themselves, and an encouragement to the world at large in its slow and laborious progress toward the better time.

This is the theory on which the Ethical Movement is based; and all of this theory it was necessary to give, if the practical movements that have followed from it were to appear in their proper light. Of worthy charities, the number is great. Why should I trouble you with a detailed account of one or the other new instrumentality of charity which we believe we have succeeded in devising? I had imagined that it must chiefly be the direction from which this movement has come that would interest you, and this is indicated in the theory. I had imagined that in the present transitional period, when religion is at such low ebb, when so many souls are tortured by doubt, when so many lives are made miserable by the lack of any support or hope in their trials and afflictions, when so many hearts are yearning for a new ideal and know not where to quench their burning thirst, it might interest you to learn in what direction a few of your fellow-men believe that they see light, what it is that makes life worth living for them, and what that purpose of existence may be which is to them a glory and an inspiration.

Ethical Society Philanthropies in New York.

It only remains, then, in accordance with the expressed wish of your committee, to enumerate the philanthropic undertakings which have emanated from the Ethical Society of New York. The task of social perfection is inextricably bound up with that of self-perfection, and both must receive their proper consideration in an ethical movement. (1) The problem of the elevation of the working classes led to a comprehensive scheme for educational reform. The benefits of this scheme are intended for the children of the rich as well as of the poor, but are designed to accrue primarily to the latter. The characteristic feature of this scheme consists in combining the elements of technical and art education, *as means of culture*, with the ordinary branches of a common-school course, and connecting them organically with the study of drawing, mathematics, and natural science. A school constructed upon this plan has been in operation during the past five years, and it now numbers more than three hundred pupils. The children are taken from the poorest quarters in the city. They receive warm luncheons at noon-time, and are supplied with clothing when necessary. (2) Free kindergartens for little ones between the ages of three and six had previously been founded in New York and other cities. (3) Reflection upon the evils attending the bringing up of children in large orphanages, where they are reared *en masse* and left without that personal kindness for which the young heart craves, led to what may be called the cottage plan of orphan homes. Groups of children, not exceeding eight or ten in each group, are placed with worthy childless couples, whose affections, not being pre-engaged, may be expected to turn toward these wards. All groups remain under the direction and supervision of a general management. Two such groups are now in existence, and the results have thus far been satisfactory. (4) The study of the problem of poverty in its more general aspects has led to a movement for the reform of the tenement houses in our city, with the understanding that the capitalists engaged in the movement shall limit themselves to a return of three per cent. on their investment, and that the remainder of the earnings shall be applied as an insurance fund for the benefit of the tenants themselves, to enable them to pay rent in hard times, or, if a sufficient fund shall be accumulated in the meantime, to live rent-free in their old age. (5) The same general question, considered in one of its most touching phases, has led to the inauguration of a system for nursing the sick poor

in their homes. Trained nurses, graduated from the hospital schools, are employed in this work. It is their business to establish cleanliness in the sick chamber, to provide for proper ventilation, to supply bed linen and necessary articles of diet whenever the patient's means are inadequate to do so, and to render such professional services as the physician in attendance may direct. This system of out-door nursing has been adopted by the New York Dispensary, and has recently been transplanted to the city of Chicago. (6) Furthermore, to take the place of the ordinary Sunday-school, classes have been inaugurated for the moral instruction of the children of the members of the Ethical Society. In these classes, a course of applied ethics is taught, the various personal and social duties are enumerated and analyzed. Problems in ethics are propounded for solution by the pupils, imaginary cases of conflicting duties are presented for casuistical discussion, and the moral judgment of the young is thus sharpened and quickened. This preliminary instruction is followed by a course of biographical study, in which the lives of men and women eminent in science, art, and philanthropy, are utilized, both as patterns to quicken a noble emulation and as a text for the further analysis of the rules of right conduct in complicated cases. In my class of girls, I have lately used the Lives of Sister Dora and of Margaret Fuller, with much profit. A course in the history of religion follows, including the Hebrew and the Christian, the Hindu, the Persian, etc., with readings from the various Scriptures. The whole scheme culminates in a popular statement of the philosophy of life, as outlined to-day in this discourse.

I have been asked whether the practical work of the Ethical Society can compare with the magnificent charities of the Christian Church. To such a question, I have no rejoinder to give. I have surely not spoken in a boastful spirit. In view of the vast amount of evil which still remains unredeemed in the world, boastfulness would ill become any man who has a brain to think, a heart to feel. What Christianity has accomplished, what its great teachers and its founder, the greatest of them all, have done for the world, amid unspeakable toil and sacrifice, who would not acknowledge in a reverent, thankful spirit? We stand on the shoulders of the past, we have absorbed its gains into our very nature, we are in a certain sense the children of the past; but we must not forget that we are also to be the fathers of the future. Not to criticise is our object, not to belittle what has been done, only to say that more must be done. With all the dreadful misery that still exists after eighteen centuries of Christian civilization, with all the poverty, the crime, the ignorance that stare us in the face, we can only repeat that more must be done. And we cannot help thinking that by diverting men's attention from the question of their individual fate in the hereafter, by teaching them to leave the care of the universe less to Providence and to assume more of the responsibility themselves, by teaching them that they are not wholly depraved, but that there is a divine element in their nature, if they will only assert it,—I cannot help thinking that we shall thus turn much of the spiritual energy, which now runs to waste in idle contemplation, into the channels of action, and shall gain a new motive power wherewith to further the glad work of the world's regeneration.

It is to be hoped that in time to come the ethical religion, which is now severe in its simplicity, will also gather grace and beauty around its teachings: that, eventually, poetry will express the new attitude toward the ideal; that music will catch the inspiration, and express the enthusiastic feeling of united aspiration toward the Highest in strains of which the choral part of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, whose burden is essentially humanitarian, may be cited as an example. It is to be hoped that the drama will acquire again a religious significance such as it had in the days of the great Greek tragedians, and that the festivals of the year will acquire a new meaning in the ethical religion. For the festivals are not peculiar to any religion; but, attaching themselves as they do, to the natural change of the seasons, they suggest the corresponding changes in man's life, and will easily lend themselves to new spiritual interpre-

tations. It is to be hoped that we shall eventually have a Festival of Childhood in mid-winter, the time of the new-born light; a Festival of Youth in the early summer, marked by such graduation exercises as are appropriate when the course of religious instruction is completed, and the young lads and the young maidens, standing on the threshold of manhood and womanhood, are ready to be solemnly received into the fellowship of their elders; a memorial service for the dead, finally, in November, when the leaves fall.

But all these developments are still in the future, and to the future it must be left to determine what shape the Ethical Movement shall take on. For the present we are content to know ourselves as pioneers. We have gone down once more to the foundations of religion, and the foundations are bare. We have struck out again into the desert in our search for a new land of promise. But we prefer the desert and freedom to the flesh-pots under the condition of inward servitude. We acknowledge but one motive,—to follow the truth as we know it, whithersoever it may lead us; but, in our heart of hearts, we are well assured that the truth which has made us free will in the end make us glad also.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.

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